

HONORING MELANIE BARKER

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 14, 2009

Mr. RADANOVICH. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Melanie Barker as the outgoing President of the Yosemite Gateway Association of Realtors. Ms. Barker will be recognized at the annual installation luncheon for the Yosemite Gateway Association of Realtors on November 21, 2008 in Oakhurst, California.

The Yosemite Gateway Association of Realtors (YGAOR) was first known as the Mountain Co-Op in 1998 with a group of eight volunteers. Today, the group has paid professional staff and ownership of the Association's building. YGAOR was responsible for developing one of the first computerized Multiple Listing Systems, which continues to operate with the latest technology. They work very closely with the California Association of Realtors by providing leadership at regional and statewide levels. YGAOR provides educational opportunities for members and fundraising activities that benefit local non-profit organizations and scholarship programs.

Under Ms. Barker's leadership, YGAOR had a very successful year. The 8th Annual Monster Rummage Sale was held earlier this year and raised over \$70,000, the highest since its establishment. The proceeds were donated to local non-profit charities. Over the years, the YGAOR Scholarship Golf Tournament has raised over \$84,000 for college scholarships for high school seniors from local high schools. Ms. Barker has been instrumental in the establishment of the Women's Council of Realtors. She was able to establish an "Affiliate Committee" to give the Association direct communication to the Office of the President. The committee structure within YGAOR has become stronger with her leadership by prioritizing structure and establishing goals to be discussed at biannual meetings. Ms. Barker has successfully brought the Senior Real Estate Specialist designation to the area through the efforts of the Education Committee.

With Ms. Barker's role at YGAOR, she has been a strong leader by providing a voice of optimism for local real estate. She has involved herself with many speaking engagements and editorial opportunities. Her goal was to provide a positive realtor image in the community and has accomplished this through her leadership during one of the toughest housing markets this nation has ever seen. She has been able to develop and build upon relationships with fellow realtors throughout the region and the state. She has also committed three weeks a year to further her education on the real estate industry and in turn, teach other members of YGAOR. Ms. Barker, the committee chairs and all of the volunteers have made 2008 a very successful year.

In 2008, Ms. Barker was also elected as Assistant Region 12 Chair for the California Association of Realtors and will become the Region 12 Chair in 2010. Prior to being named as President of YGAOR, she was the first Local Government Relations Chair and Government Affairs Director for YGAOR. In 2006, Ms. Barker became a California Golden R.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend and congratulate Melanie Barker upon her

achievements. I invite my colleagues to join me in wishing Ms. Barker and the Yosemite Gateway Association of Realtors many years of continued success.

RECOGNIZING THE EFFORTS OF
THOSE WHO SERVE THEIR COMMUNITIES
ON MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN B. LARSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 13, 2009

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 43—Recognizing the efforts of those who serve their communities on Martin Luther King Day. Of the many legacies left behind by this great leader, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s message of community building is one that resonates with us today.

Martin Luther King Jr. recognized that in striving toward equality, the true work begins in the neighborhoods and streets of our communities. King demonstrated power of service through his work spreading his message across the United States. We not only pause on January 19, 2009, Martin Luther King Day to remember his legacy, but we use this as a day to promote his message of service. Volunteers across this great nation are working on service projects to commemorate his vision and teachings. In addition to asking Americans to serve, President-elect Obama, Vice President-elect BIDEN, and their families will participate in service activities. President-elect Barack Obama leads by example as a former Chicago community organizer, helping people one at a time. When he calls for progress and change he asks the American people to participate in that change. Martin Luther King Day should inspire us all to participate in serving our communities throughout the year.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in commemoration and celebration of the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In addition, in the coming days and beyond, I encourage my fellow Americans to both celebrate great change that has come and strive to be the change that we need as we progress towards King's vision of the "beloved community."

COAL ASH RECLAMATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY ACT OF 2009

HON. NICK J. RAHALL, II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 14, 2009

Mr. RAHALL. Madam Speaker, years ago a coal miner from West Virginia wrote a letter to me noting that every single federal law regulating coal was penned in blood. He was referring to the fact that it took an explosion claiming 78 souls in 1968 at a mine in Farmington, West Virginia, to give rise to the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969. And that it took the failure of a coal slurry impoundment at Buffalo Creek, in Logan County, West Virginia, that killed 125 people, for the Congress to finally pass the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977.

Just a few weeks ago, in December, a facility owned by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) gave way, unleashing an avalanche of coal ash sludge that covered more than 300 acres. This time Heaven intervened, and thankfully no lives were lost.

This disaster—which could have been avoided if TVA had exercised appropriate engineering and monitoring regimes at its Kingston facility in Harriman, Tennessee—was a clarion call for action. Now is the time to take that action, before any lives are lost to a similar disaster.

Simply put, there are no federal standards for coal ash impoundments. They are constructed and maintained under a patchwork of State requirements, or on a voluntary basis.

Today I am introducing legislation to impose uniform federal design, engineering, and performance standards on coal ash impoundments. These standards are aimed at ensuring the structural stability of these impoundments, and requiring adequate monitoring and inspection regimes to avoid a repeat of what happened at Kingston, Tennessee, and what almost happened just last week at another TVA facility in Alabama.

Coal ash is a byproduct of the combustion of coal at electric utility powerplants. Some of the coal ash produced is recycled, usually as construction materials like concrete, Portland cement, and wallboard. However, the majority of coal ash is deposited in impoundments, landfills, or mines.

The larger issue here is how to regulate coal ash, and, in this respect, the track record is woefully inadequate. Back in 1980, former Representative Tom Bevill of Alabama and this gentleman from West Virginia successfully offered an amendment to what became the Solid Waste Disposal Act of 1980 requiring the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to determine how to regulate coal ash.

I am sorry to say that after 29 years the EPA has yet to do so. Over the years, I have cajoled the agency to move forward. It came close to making a decision under the Clinton Administration, then retrenched under the Bush Administration. I called for a study by the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences on this issue, which was completed in 2006. Following up on that study, last year our colleague, Rep. JIM COSTA, in his capacity as the Chairman of the Energy and Minerals Subcommittee of the Natural Resources Committee, held a hearing on coal ash. The study, and the hearing, all pointed to the pressing need for a federal regulatory regime governing the disposal of coal ash, whether in impoundments, landfills, or in mines.

I have no doubt that the Obama Administration will finally take action on this issue. In the meantime, however, the purpose of my legislation is to address the engineering aspects of the impoundments themselves.

For its part, the electric utility industry says it complies with voluntary guidelines in this matter. And some States claim they have adequate requirements. Yet, as it stands, one State might require strict standards for the construction of a coal ash pond, while the State next door largely ignores how coal ash ponds are constructed. Pennsylvania, for example, requires a solid waste permit for all surface impoundments that receive coal ash, while Illinois and Indiana are among the states that regulate surface impoundments as water

pollution control facilities, rather than solid waste management units.

Similarly, requirements for liners for coal ash ponds vary State by State. For example, Alabama and Florida do not require liners for surface impoundments for coal ash, while Wisconsin does.

The argument that all States have adequate regulations for coal ash is not substantiated by the facts. It is impossible to write off the disaster in Tennessee as a freak accident. The absence of national standards for coal ash has resulted in environmental damage throughout the country—not just last month, or last year, but for decades. In 2007, the EPA recognized 67 contaminated sites in 23 states where coal combustion byproducts have polluted groundwater or surface water. This may be just the tip of the iceberg, because most coal ash sites in the United States are not adequately monitored.

The “Coal Ash Reclamation and Environmental Safety Act of 2009” requires minimum design and stability standards for all surface impoundments constructed to hold coal ash. The bill draws on the regulatory model for impoundments that is used for coal slurry management under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977. Requirements for coal slurry impoundments that would be made applicable to coal ash impoundments under 2 this legislation cover aspects of design, construction, operation, and closure, including:

Regulations detailing the engineering and stability of the embankment.

Regulations requiring all applications for an impoundment to have a foundation investigation to determine design requirements for stability.

Each design plan must include a geotechnical investigation of the embankment foundation area.

Each impoundment plan must include a survey describing the potential effect on the structure from subsidence of the subsurface strata resulting from past mining operations in the area.

Plans for impoundments must be reviewed by a geologist or an engineer.

Regulations requiring that a qualified engineer, with experience in construction of impoundments, inspect each impoundment regularly during construction, upon completion of construction, and periodically thereafter.

The “Coal Ash Reclamation and Environmental Safety Act of 2009” also requires immediate development of a detailed inventory and analysis of all existing coal ash disposal sites, to guide informed and prompt decisions on how to bring that universe of ponds and lagoons up to safe standards, now.

For States that already have careful standards for coal ash disposal, the bill I am introducing will not be a problem. For those that do not, the “Coal Ash Reclamation Environmental Safety Act of 2009” will require immediate attention to shocking gaps in coal ash management.

As a witness at our hearing last year so presciently reminded the Subcommittee on Energy and Minerals: “the cost of safe disposal [of coal ash] is not burdensome to industry, although it has proved, at site after site, to be catastrophic to the public and the environment.”

The time to act is now.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE MARINE TURTLE CONSERVATION REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2009: JANUARY 9, 2009

HON. HENRY E. BROWN, JR.

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 14, 2009

Mr. BROWN of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, I am today pleased to introduce the Marine Turtle Conservation Reauthorization Act of 2009.

There are 7 species of marine turtles which were once abundant throughout the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Oceans. Sadly, 6 of those species including the Green turtle, the hawksbill, the Kemp's ridley, the leatherback, the loggerhead and the Olive ridley, have experienced tremendous over-exploitation and they are now listed as critically endangered under our Endangered Species Act. In fact, only the flatback turtle which lives in the inshore waters of Australia has managed to maintain a healthy population.

While there are many reasons for the dramatic decline in marine turtle population numbers, the leading factors include foreign fishing practices, the destruction of essential nesting habitat, massive poaching of turtle eggs, meat and shells, the degradation of grass beds and coral reefs, light pollution from onshore development and the dumping of tons of plastic products into our oceans.

In response to this crisis, the Congress enacted the Marine Turtle Conservation Act of 2004 which I strongly supported. While this law authorized up to \$20 million in Federal funds over the past 4 fiscal years, only \$2.2 million has been appropriated to finance worthwhile conservation projects. Despite these funding limitations, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has leveraged nearly \$4 million in private matching funds and together this money has funded 78 meritorious conservation projects in more than 60 countries. While more than 200 grant proposals have been submitted, sadly, the Service has only awarded grants to less than 40 percent of the eligible recipients.

Nevertheless, a number of extraordinary projects have been funded. These included a project to assist loggerhead turtles in Oman which has the largest nesting population of this species in the world; a project to protect leatherback turtles at their 4 primary nesting beaches in Mexico and a project to assist the highly depleted Chiriqui Beach hawksbill nesting population in Panama.

Madam Speaker, marine turtles have been a vital component of our ocean ecosystems for more than 100 million years. They have long symbolized longevity, fertility and strength. We are proud of the fact that populations of loggerhead sea turtles nest on our beaches in South Carolina where they are highly protected.

Like canaries in a coal mine, declining populations of marine sea turtles are a bellwether species for the health of the world's oceans. The Marine Turtle Conservation Act of 2004 sent a powerful message of the international community that the United States was willing to take proactive conservation efforts to save these flagship species from extinction. It is essential that this law which has yet to reach its full potential be reauthorized beyond this fiscal year.

The legislation I am introducing today would extend the authorization of appropriations for the Marine Turtle Conservation Fund until September 30, 2014. Despite severe funding limitations, this law has conclusively demonstrated that it is an effective and essential lifeline to marine turtle populations throughout the world. We should not allow any of these 6 species of marine turtles to disappear during our lifetime.

I urge early consideration of the Marine Turtle Conservation Reauthorization Act of 2009.

CONGRATULATING HOSTELLING INTERNATIONAL USA

HON. SUE WILKINS MYRICK

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 14, 2009

Mrs. MYRICK. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Hostelling International USA for 75 years of service to intercultural understanding and youth travel.

Hostelling International USA is a nonprofit organization founded in 1934 to promote hostels and hostel-related programs in the United States, especially among youth travelers. In doing so, it promotes cultural exchange through travel and supports tourism for local economies.

The North Carolina Council of Hostelling International USA promotes hostelling in North Carolina by offering workshops on world travel and intercultural understanding at local venues, including NC college campuses and through local Girl Scout troops. During the past year, the NC Council funded overnight stays for 51 young people and their group leaders, allowing them to stay at hostels in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, Philadelphia's Fairmont Park, and Washington, DC.

I congratulate Hostelling International USA for its 75 years of service to our country and our state.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. STEVE KAGEN

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 14, 2009

Mr. KAGEN. Madam Speaker, I deeply regret that I was not able to vote on H. Res. 34 recognizing Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza and reaffirming the United States' strong support for Israel, and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. On Wednesday, January 7, 2009, I had surgery on my knee and was not able to be present for voting.

Make no mistake about it, I fully support Israel's right to defend itself against all attacks. I would have wholeheartedly voted for H. Res. 34.

Presently, Israel, like any other country, is exercising its right to self-defense. If any country were attacked like Israel has been they would do the same.

How many attacks on an American city would we tolerate from our neighbors? Zero.

In July 2008, I visited Sderot, an Israeli town just over the border from Gaza. I toured sites where Israeli homes were destroyed by rockets launched from Gaza. I met with the U.S.